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SUBJECT: CONGO/B: ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL AFRICA
MEETING, ADB CANDIDACY OF RWANDA FINANCE MINISTER DISCUSSED

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBIN R. SANDERS, REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary: As current chairman of the Economic Community of Central Africa States (CEEAC/ECCA) sub regional organization, President Sassou convened a summit June 7-8 to encourage CEEAC Presidents to reinvigorate the near moribund entity. Known more in the region by its French acronym CEEAC than the English acronym ECCA, this session sought to clearly define the mission of the group, to seek better harmony among member states, improve budgetary and financial management of resources, and work together for better regional and international CEEAC decisions. Sassou's term as CEEAC chairman was extended to March 2006, when Chad takes over the chairmanship. Only three CEEAC Presidents turned up for the summit - Bongo of Gabon, Kabila of DRC, and Bozizi of CAR. All other heads of state were represented at either the vice-presidential (Burundi), prime minister level (Cameroon, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, and Rwanda), or ministerial level (Sao Tome and Principe). One of the key issues discussed behind closed doors during the session was the candidacy of Rwandan Finance Minister Donald Kaberuka for the post of the President of the African Development Bank (ADB). Kaberuka and Rwanda Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister Mirgande attended the Summit to seek CEEAC member support in the next ADB voting round in Tunis July 21-22. During Ambassador's June 8 cocktails for Kaberuka and Mirgande, she was told that Gabonese President Bongo, at present, would not lend his support to the Kaberuka ADB candidacy. Kaberuka also added that the biggest surprise in the closed session was that DRC President Kabila said he would "consider" supporting the Rwandan candidacy now that the Zimbabwean candidate is out. End Summary.

CEEAC Summit:

2.(C) The 11-nation Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) sub-regional organization held a summit June 7-8 under the auspices of the current chairman, Republic of Congo President Denis Sassou Nguesso (Sassou is serving his second concurrent term as CEEAC Chairman). The primary focus of the Summit was to increase harmony among member states and encourage better commitment and payment of dues to the organization. Under the "improving harmony theme," was a complaint by Gabonese President Bongo, that CEEAC Presidents were not showing up for summit meetings, reflecting a lack of commitment to the organization. He reportedly stressed the need to improve CEEAC participation at the highest level and that he was disappointed with the turn out at this summit session. (NB: Part of the problem with poor attendance is that CEEAC summit seems to be called every 6 months.)

3. (C) In addition to the lack of harmony issue raised, regional integration also was noted as a problem, which ROC President Sassou underlined as key to development. President Sassou cited the need for a permanent United Nations office in Central Africa that would provide long-term assistance to member states as an important step as well as having a free trade zone, reducing tariffs among CEEAC states, and allowing for better immigration practices to assist CEEAC citizens with more freedom of movement. On budget and finance issues, reports are that the organization's secretariat is broke and has no resources to implement mission goals, albeit the fact they are loosely defined. Each member state was encouraged to increase its financial commitment to the CEEAC by 10 per cent. Improving regional security issues noted by the members as an important component of regional development. Outside of regional government leaders and officials, the UN Secretary-General sent two representatives to highlight UN

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development and HIV/AIDS activities. The ADB also sent a representative to the summit.

Rwandan Finance Ministers ADB Candidacy

4. (C) Rwandan Foreign Minister Charles Mirgande and Finance

Minister Kaberuka briefed Ambassador June 8 over cocktails at her home about the closed-door discussion on the latter's candidacy for the position of ADB President. Mirgande said that Gabonese President Bongo (also Sassou's son-in-law) was in an angry mood over the ADB issue, noting that the region had not supported his candidate so why should he support a CEEAC move to back Kaberuka. Both Mirgande and Kaberuka said that Sassou played the role of referee with Bongo as he sought to encourage him not to block the Kaberuka ADB candidacy and emphasized that this issue could be the first step in better CEEAC harmony. Despite Sassou's best efforts, according to Mirgande and Kaberuka, Bongo would not budge on a commitment or public statement of CEEAC support at the summit. However after many interventions by Sassou, Bongo later agreed to further discuss the issue at "another time" by saying that "Kagame could come to see him to talk about it."

15. (C) Kaberuka then highlighted what he thought was the most important aspect of the closed-door session: Kabila saying before the other leaders that he would "consider" having the DRC vote for him now that the Zimbabwean candidate was out. The Rwandan Finance Minister added that Kabila asked him to come to Kinshasa before the end of June to further discuss the issue as well as Kaberuka's vision for the ADB if elected in July. Kaberuka told the Ambassador that his position with President Kagame upon his return to Rwanda will be not only to agree to the travel to Kinshasa, but also recommend that Kagame travel to Libreville to see Bongo. Kaberuka believed that Bongo was still smarting from his candidate being out in the first round. However he thought Bongo would come around with a little public relations effort by Rwanda such as Kagame traveling to Libreville. Mirgande told the Ambassador that he was not as convinced that Kagame should go to Libreville, but there may be other meeting venues coming up where discussions on the ADB issue could be held.

16. (C) Comment: The CEEAC - established in October 1983 -- continues to be a regional organization, with little-to-no clout, impact or direction. Although Sassou has been chairman of the group since 2003, he has struggled to turn it into a bigger version of CEMAC (the Central African Monetary Community), which has the six countries of Gabon, Chad, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea. CEMAC is more active and has made key steps toward better integration among the six member states such as a CEMAC passport, free movement of some goods and services, and extradition and other treaties. The biggest issue at the CEEAC summit was the ADB candidacy of Kaberuka and clearly at the end of the summit harmony was not reached on this issue even though there was a press report citing the Rwandan Prime Minister as saying all members at the CEEAC summit supported Kaberuka.

17. (U) BRAZZAVILLE EMBASSY OFFICE - SANDERS.
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